

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 NEAE-00 PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02
SS-15 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01
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P R 181523Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6817
INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
AMEMBASSY VALLETTA
AMEMBASSY LDONON

C O N F I D E N T I A L TUNIS 3475

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, ENRG, ELAB, TS, LY
SUBJECT: HABIB ACHOUR RETURNS FROM TRIPOLI, COMMENTS ON CONTI-
NENTAL SHELF

REF: TUNIS 3409

SUMMARY: TUNISIAN TRADE UNION LEADER ACHOUR ANNOUNCED ON
HIS RETURN FROM A TRIP TO LIBYA THAT HE HAD MET WITH LIBYAN
LEADER QADHAFI AND DISCUSSED CONTINENTAL SHELF DISPUTE.
IN PRESS STATEMENT ACHOUR GAVE IMPRESSION THAT QADHAFI WAS
WILLING TO SEEK PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT OF DISPUTE. QADHAFI'S
STATEMENTS AS QUOTED BY ACHOUR, HOWEVER, DO NOT APPEAR TO MAKE
SIGNIFICANT CONCESSIONS TO TUNISIANS. END SUMMARY.

1. TUNISIAN TRADE UNION LEADER HABIB ACHOUR, WHO DEPARTED
FOR TRIPOLI ON MAY 14 FOR VISIT TO LIBYAN TRADE UNION ORGANI-
ZATION, RETURNED TO TUNIS MAY 17. SEMI-INDEPENDENT DAILY LE
TEMPS AND RADIO TUNIS MORNING NEWS ON MAY 18 GAVE HIS RETURN
INTENSIVE COVERAGE. LE TAMP'S HEADLINE QUOTED ACHOUR AS SAYING
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"QADHAFI IS CONVINCED OF SOLUTION TO CONTINENTAL SHELF DISPUTE
ON BASIS OF LAW." IN HIS ARRIVAL STATEMENT AT THE AIRPORT,
ACHOUR SAID HE MET WITH QADHAFI FOR OVER THREE HOURS AND
THAT THEY DISCUSSED THE "WORKER QUESTION," THE JERBA UNITY DE-
CLARATION, THE CONTINENTAL SHELF, AND ECONOMIC AND TECHNICAL
COOPERATION BETWEEN THEIR TWO COUNTRIES.

2. CONCERNING THE CONTINENTAL SHELF, ACHOUR SAID (ACCORDING TO GOT PRESS AGENCY TAP ON MAY 18) THAT "THE RIGHTS OF EACH OF THE TWO PARTIES OUGHT TO BE RESPECTED, THAT IS THE BELIEF OF TUNISIA AND OF THE JAMAHIRIYYAH." ACHOUR SAID HE "PERCEIVED A BROAD UNDERSTANDING ON THE PART OF COLONEL QADHAFI FOR THE SOLUTIONS THAT WE HAVE ADVOCATED." ACHOUR ADDED THAT HE HAD PROPOSED A "TECHNICAL DIVISION" WITH THE AID OF ARAB EXPERTS.

3. LE TEMPS WENT FARTHER THAN TAP IN ITS STORY ON ACHOUR'S RETURN, REPORTING ALSO THAT ACHOUR SAID IT WAS UNNECESSARY TO APPEAL TO FOREIGN THIRD PARTIES TO RESOLVE THE CONTINENTAL SHELF DISPUTE, ACHOUR REPORTEDLY SAID THAT TUNISIA AND LIBYA COULD SOLVE THIS ISSUE THEMSELVES OR WITH THE ADVICE OF ARAB EXPERTS FROM THE GULF OR FROM ARAB COUNTRIES THAT HAVE HAD SIMILAR PROBLEMS.

4. ON THE JERBA UNITY DECLARATION, TAP ALSO REPORTED THAT ACHOUR TOLD QADHAFI "WE ARE NOT UNAWARE OF THE GREAT IMPORTANCE OF THIS ISSUE AND BELIEVE, TAKING INTO ACCOUNT PREVIOUS EXPERIENCES IN THE ARAB WORLD, THAT UNION OUGHT TO BE PRECEDED BY CONCERTED ACTION BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES, BY AS WIDE A COOPERATION AS POSSIBLE, AND BY CONSULTATION OF THE TWO PEOPLES." ACHOUR CALLED HIS DISCUSSION OF THIS POINT WITH QADHAFI "VERY FRANK."

5. ACHOUR AND HIS LIBYAN TRADE UNION HOSTS SIGNED JOINT COMMUNIQUE THAT PROMISED IMMEDIATE JOINT EFFORTS IN VOCATIONAL AND TRADE UNION EDUCATION. ACCORDING TO LE TEMPS IT ALSO CALLED ON LEADERS OF THEIR TWO GOVERNMENTS "TO END THEIR DISPUTE AND TO BEGIN IMMEDIATELY NEGOTIATIONS WITH A VIEW TO CREATING A FAVORABLE CLIMATE FOR A COMMON ENTERPRISE" AND ENDED WITH A PROMISE TO ESTABLISH A CONFIDENTIAL

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CALM CLIMATE PRELIMINARY TO HASTENING TRUE UNION, "THE DESIRE OF THE WORKER MASSES OF THE TWO COUNTRIES."

6. WE UNDERSTAND THAT ACHOUR'S TRIP TO LIBYA IS BEING DESCRIBED BY GOT AS A TRADE UNION EXCHANGE RATHER THAN A "SPECIAL MISSION" FOR GOVERNMENT. AS A MEMBER OF THE PSD POLITICAL BUREAU, HOWEVER, HE WAS CERTAINLY AWARE OF CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS IN SHELF DISPUTE. TAP PRESS RELEASE SAID HE WOULD REPORT ON HIS TRIP TO PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA AND PRIME MINISTER NOUIRA.

7. IT APPEARS THAT ACHOUR TOOK OPPORTUNITY OF HIS LONG MEETING WITH QADHAFI TO DISCUSS TUNISIAN/LIBYAN BILATERAL ISSUES AND SOUGHT PUBLICITY FOR THIS MEETING ON HIS RETURN TO TUNIS TO BOLSTER HIS PERSONAL POLITICAL STOCK. THERE IS NO INDICATION HE GOT ANYTHING SUBSTANTIVE OUT OF QADHAFI. WE NOTE FBIS REPORT OF LIBYAN RADIO NEWS BROADCAST COVERING ACHOUR VISIT TO TRIPOLI IN WHICH NO MENTION WAS MADE OF HIS CALL ON QADHAFI, NOR OF CONTINENTAL SHELF ISSUE, NOR OF COMMUNIQUE'S CALLING ON LEADERS OF TUNISIA AND LIBYA TO END THEIR DISPUTE.

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